



What the customer thinks of it all - the trainee's perspective

Do companies implement training programmes just to inject an occasional "feel good" moment. If so, who feels good?

Until recently, trainees at XZY company [name withheld] thought the management were at best using training courses to pay lip service to a good idea. At worst, using training as a control device.

Ben Humphrey's, XYZ's Southern Region Sales Co-ordinator, summed things up.

"Every so often we'd be given a top up. They used to be "courses", then they became "workshops" and then they became "blue sky initiatives". The courses were never continuous, so I can see why they were renamed workshops - little stop gap events. Nobody knew what a blue sky initiative was, which meant no one could measure the results, which is convenient, isn't it?

I liked the idea of getting some fresh ideas and a gee-up from time to time, which sometimes happened and sometimes didn't. But what I really wanted was some sense of permanent input and measurable progress. I'm not sure the decision makers who set up company-wide programmes truly consider how people really learn things. The momentum of a day-long or even week-long course is quickly lost when you return to the chalk face. And there's never a chance to put ideas into practice so that the learning "sticks". So the momentum just evaporates. The company wastes its money; I get frustrated. Eventually the idea of going on a training course becomes depressing because they simply remind you how much you are failing compared with best practice.

When that happens, you start to wonder who the trainers are, why they've been chosen, what they know that's so special. What's the scoop? Those who can - do, those who can't - train?

Anyway, things have changed for the better and I have really bought into the programme introduced by the new Chairman. Apparently he was a victim of haphazard training initiatives on his way up. Before he became Chairman he said he was going to do two things for us on the training front. One, he was going to find the right experts with the right credentials and a true understanding of our business. Two, he wasn't going to turn training on and off like a tap.

Nowadays, the learning, the opportunity to practice and skills' reinforcement are common to everyone in the company. We all have the same experiences, struggles and successes, so we understand what each other is going through. Of course, we have common goals too. I would say it's taken about a year to generate an almost self-perpetuating culture. We don't feel silly about the trainers' cute sayings and phrases and theories - because we've seen them translated into better and happier performance.

And it's ongoing. The guys who are responsible for our development, even though they're outsourced, have a genuine commitment to us, so they've won our trust. I feel comfortable because I see the same faces and I have a regular mentor in the wings. The old "here today, gone tomorrow" feeling has disappeared. The training company is accountable, too; they do listen to what we say.





I have to give our Chairman credit for his insight - and his courage. How many times have you read a load of rubbish about the Chairman's commitment to his most valuable asset, his staff. Well, our man meant it and he was prepared to fight, even the shareholders, to finance the programme. But he's been proven right - profits are up - and all the sceptics and short-termists have gone to ground."

The successful training company BH describes is PMC.

PMC takes a firm stand on the importance of creating strong medium and long-term relationships with their clients.

They take the view that quick fixes and ad hoc services do not work, on two main grounds.

The first being that short term programmes just **do not** complement the way that people learn and develop effectively, so the inefficiencies and waste are immense. They argue that under such circumstances the best they can achieve is to give the people a taste of what things could be like.

The second reason is practical. Most decision makers want immediate results because they are **reacting** to one market force or another. They can foster an air of desperation. They ramp up too quickly. Under such circumstances, PMC finds itself constantly fire fighting.

Just throwing money at it, however large an amount, doesn't fix a problem when you are trying to cultivate your business through your personnel. It's not how human beings operate best and it doesn't translate into business growth.

